Leading Happiness: Leadership and Happiness at a Workplace

Khairunesa Isa, Siti Solehah Tenah, Asliaty Atim, Nor Aishah Mat Jam

Abstract: *Organizational achievement is determined by a number of factors, particularly human resources. Human resources with high levels of happiness will affect productivity and the smoothness of tasks performed. Since employees spend most of their day working in an organization, it is obvious that the organizational environment will affect the employees' emotional well-being. This article discusses the meaning of happiness at workplace and the leadership factors that influence employees' happiness. Other than adopting effective leadership concepts, leaders who have the skills to listen and think about the career path of the employees are found to highly influence their employees' happiness in the organization.*

Keywords: *employees' happiness, skills to listen, effective leadership, organizational achievement*

I. INTRODUCTION

Happiness can be referred to as a general term that describes life in peace and happiness (Fisher, 2010). Individuals who achieve their goals in life will experience the joys of happiness and thus achieve the desired satisfaction in life. Happiness is something that is subjective and needed by humans. However, the interpretation of each individual's happiness is different because it has different physical and mental effects on human life. Employees are important assets in ensuring that the organization continues to achieve its goals. Employees who show great potential will have a huge impact on the success of the organization. However, organizations also need highly committed employees so that they can contribute positive impacts to the overall organizational performance. In this context, it is important for organizations to ensure that the employees are able to remain loyal and continue working in the organizations.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Gavin da Mason (2004), in order to achieve happiness in life, individuals need to work in an organization that can influence their level of happiness. Organizational supports such as the facilities provided, the role of management and the influence of co-workers are crucial in promoting happy employees (Cannon, 2017; Bader et al., 2013 and Siska and Ami, 2014). The interaction that exists between an employer and an employee either formally or informally is strongly associated with the employee's level of happiness. However, in most organizations today there are leaders who do not treat their employees in a proper manner (Arnetz, 1999). Some leaders are rude to their employees especially when they are unable to provide a more innovative perspective in their work (Abdul Raziq and Raheela, 2015). From a psychological point of view, these workers will be embarrassed and turn the event into a negative experience that may contribute to low work motivation which ultimately causes the employees to feel unhappy in the organization (Ma'arof, 2001). According to Sulaiman (2014) employees are unhappy at work when there is a communication gap between the superiors and the staff members, employers are not concerned with the development of the workforce, employees' ideas are ignored, lack of welfare benefits to the workers and the employers do not appreciate what their employees have done.

As a leader in an organization, there are some principles that a leader should practise when dealing with the employees such as being realistic, fair, considerate and empathic. According to Chiumento (2006), organizational leadership factors such as cooperation in management, structure and work system, decision-making power, leadership credibility and employer recognition can also contribute to a stressful employee. Therefore, it is important for leaders to ensure that every action taken in any situation in the organization, such as in making decisions and giving directions, is carried out in a rational and prudent manner. For that reason, this study was conducted to determine the leadership qualities that enable employees to feel happy while working in the organization.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Happiness can be defined as a positive or negative response that affects the level of satisfaction in human life (Diener et al., 1995). According to Jain (2012), happiness results from one's emotions and pleasant feelings as well as positive attitude towards something. Happy individuals are more likely to offer help to others besides being creative in doing things, being pro-social in society, being charitable and healthier both physically and mentally (Diener & Dean, 2007).

Happiness in the workplace is a positive feeling that employees have every time they are at work. This feeling arises when employees are able to manage, carry out their tasks and produce outputs that give them satisfaction (Pryce and Jones, 2010).

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Happiness in the workplace not only refers to individual intrinsic factors but also to individual extrinsic factors such as organizational environment (Zafir, 2010), relationship with others (Carr, 2004; Wesarat, Majid and Sharif, 2015; Wulandri and Widyastuti, 2014); and other factors that are directly related to the tasks performed such as job satisfaction (Cannon, 2017) autonomy (Diamond and Lukman Judge, 2014), leadership, salary, reward and so on. There are many perspectives of effective leadership in terms of its definition, role and function. These roles and functions can sometimes vary depending on the type of field and the organization's goals.

The status of a leader is seen to be so influential in the success of an organization that a charismatic leader is said to be able to reflect the credibility and prestigious reputation of the organization. According to Bohn's (2003), leadership or how a leader behaves is directly related to the organizational performance. This means that the aspects of leadership have a direct impact on the organizational performance through the role of the employees in the organization. Thus, not only the physical characteristics of the leader but the talent, attitude, knowledge and skills possessed by the leader are also seen to have a significant impact on the workforce that ultimately affects the performance of the organization.

Effective leaders are those who are able to see the future especially in planning what they want to achieve and the activities that are in line with their efforts to achieve that goal. Based on previous leadership theories, Bass (1990) found that there are three ways of explaining how to be a good and effective leader (i) according to Trait Theory, some personality traits will indirectly encourage leaders to act among other members of their organization, (ii) The Great Event states that individuals will react based on an event or crisis that occurs; and (iii) Transformational Leadership Theory states that anyone can choose to be a leader because everyone can learn leadership skills and knowledge.

Democratic style of leadership is found to be more influential in the performance of the employees than the autocratic style of leadership. According to Iqbal et al., (2015), autocratic leadership has only a short-term effect compared to democratic leadership. This is because the autocratic leadership makes the employees feel compelled to do their work while democratic leadership encourages employees to work openly and voluntarily. On the other hand, as an individual responsible for determining the direction and goals of an organization, a leader needs to be aware of his or her position as a leader (Arnold et al., 2001). In this context, leaders need to be ready at all times to act in any sudden situation or problem and precede any task before asking others to take on the task.

II. METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted on 500 randomly selected public service organization employees. An open-ended questionnaire was given to each respondent. Questions were specifically about the leadership qualities that are expected to contribute to the employees' happiness at work.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the open-ended question found that the leadership element had the highest score of 86 in the recommendations that need to be taken to promote the employees' happiness. On average, respondents expected a leader to have a good character as well as use a more mature and transformative leadership style in the organization. The respondents expected their leaders to be considerate and unselfish, and think about the welfare of the workers. A leader who shows off, seeks for fame and yells at the employees, is found to affect the employees' happiness. Further analysis showed that employees would be happier if the leader could be a good listener. The highest-rated item with the score of 12 stated that a leader who listens would make the employees happy because the leader would be ready at any time to hear any thoughts, ideas or problems from the employees. In addition, the respondents also thought that happiness in the workplace would be easier to achieve if the leaders adopt effective leadership approach that is more supportive to the employees. This is evident when the findings showed that items such as consideration, respect, understanding of employees, courtesy and tolerance are needed for employees to be happier when working under a leader.

According to Meriam and Chaiprasit (2017) and Santidhirakul (2011), the aspects of leadership are strongly related to influencing the employees' level of happiness. Autocratic leaders will cause employers to feel pressured and apprehensive. This situation eventually causes the employees to feel less valued and more likely to call it quits or leave their current positions. Therefore, the respondents suggested that in order to achieve a level of happiness the employer should not be egotistic and bossy, but is more sensitive to the needs and welfare of their staff members. According to Bass (1985) transformational leadership characteristics such as intellectual stimulation, charismatic and individual-centred thinking can stimulate commitment among employees while employees who are willing to be committed are those who are happy and satisfied with their working environment (Isa et al ., 2018).

IV. CONCLUSION

Employment is one of the factors for individuals to achieve happiness in life. Working is a platform that develops individuals' potentials and thus gaining recognition in life. Therefore, it can be said that besides organizations, employees also have their own career goals that need to be achieved in order to accomplish their goals in life. Individuals who achieve their goals in life will be happy and indirectly, this will improve their self-esteem. In any organization, a leader plays an important role in determining the employees' happiness. Besides ensuring that the organizational environment can influence the level of employees' happiness, a leader also needs to establish leadership qualities that contribute to the employees' happiness at work. Having respect and concern for the welfare of the employees should be emphasized so that the employees will feel as part of the organization. Therefore, the employees are more at ease and happier at work. As a result, not only employees manage to improve their career performance, but the organization will also be more productive.

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